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Andrews - Letter to Thurlow Weed - 1864

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FROM

Hon. Charles Sumner

1875

1875

LETTER
OF
RUFUS F. ANDREWS,

Lately Surveyor of the Port of New York,

TO

THURLOW WEED,

Lately Editor of the Albany Evening Journal.



NEW YORK:

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1864.

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865, May 24.

Gift of

John P. H. H. H.

(1865-1885)

LETTER
OF
RUFUS F. ANDREWS,
LATELY SURVEYOR OF THE PORT OF NEW YORK,
TO
THURLOW WEED,
LATELY EDITOR OF THE ALBANY EVENING JOURNAL.

NEW YORK, *December 10th*, 1864.

TO MR. THURLOW WEED :

The smoke of conflict having cleared away, the political horizon being free from cloud or threatening of storm, the last hope of traitors being dissipated by the re-election of Abraham Lincoln, and victory perching upon every war-banner of the Union, it is not inappropriate that I should now attend to the settlement of a long-standing account between us. While there was danger that to avenge personal wrongs might damage the cause of Republican government and free institutions, I held my peace and submitted in silence to your dastardly attacks. Now that the efforts of Union men have

been crowned with success, I propose to set myself right in the public estimation as against your repeated and studied calumnies, and, stripping your shoulders of the vaunted patriotism beneath which you have so long and so successfully plied the arts of demagogue, hypocrite, and ingrate, "give you to posterity, not as a pattern to imitate, but as an example to deter."

For years you have waxed great;—your power has been as absolute within your sphere as that of the Khan of Tartary in his dominions; your will has been law, your frown a terror, and your favor a fortune to your followers and worshippers. They have regarded you with mingled awe and reverence, and accepted your teachings with the same blind credulity that characterized the devotion of the "bold believers" and "fire-eyed disputants" of the famed Mokanna. Be mine the task to expose your rank features, and show you unveiled to your dupes. Then let them and the world

" * * judge, if sin with all its power to blur,
Can add one vice to the foul thing you are."

Our acquaintance commenced in the year 1857-8. I was then a young man in the pursuit of my avocation as a lawyer in this city, and you the editor and publisher of an influential public journal in the Capital of the State. I was unknown beyond the circles of the metropolis; your name was as familiar throughout the land as house-breaking to a burglar or perjury to a dicer. I went to Albany on professional business, and had the misfortune to make your acquaintance. You sought and received an introduction to me. I had known you previously under various designations, and my curiosity was piqued to be brought into familiar intercourse with

a person who bore the titles of "the Old Man," "the Lucifer of the Lobby," "Fagin the Jew," &c. I had heard you credited with capacity to arrest the wheels of State legislation, and to set them in motion, to convert public bills into private benefactions, to exalt and enrich your proteges, and debase and impoverish your enemies. I was informed you had at least one agent in each school district of the State whom you owned, and who knew nothing among men save Thurlow Weed and what he desired; that so absolute was your mastery over these bondmen that with them black was white, and crime only a reduced form of goodness, if you so adjudged; that professing a certain political faith, they would vote for the candidate of the opposition, whenever "the Old Man" wanted a fresh victim or a new favorite. Do you wonder that a young man, ambitious to be something more than drift-wood in the political current, felt himself honored by your condescension in talking with him of public men and measures as though you really intended consulting his opinions? I acknowledge the snare was artfully laid, and that I was ignorant enough of your true character to be impressed favorably by your apparent sincerity.

In the same year that you were introduced to me, I was employed professionally to attend before the Senate Committee of Cities and Villages to advocate the passage of various Railroad Charters in the City of New York. *You were then a resident of Albany.* The charters were granted to certain named incorporators, *and in every one of them you had a direct pecuniary interest, at the time of the passage of the Act,* although your name did not appear in any of the grants as a Corporator. "The

Old Man" was taken care of in every instance where the necessary two-thirds vote was secured! Curious, is it not, Mr. Weed? Strange, but true. Can you account for it, Sir? Will you dare deny it?

Time wore on, and you and I were thrown a great deal together in politics. The American party lived its hour, and after its demise I joined my lot with the Republicans. The presidential campaign of 1860 found me an earnest worker for the election of Mr. Lincoln, and when the rebellion broke out, and ever since, I devoted all my energies to the support of the government.

In the fall of 1862 you began to exhibit impatience with the President, and disaffection towards your old party associates. It was bruited about that you were going to join what was left of the democratic party, and were paving your way for admission to the honors of that communion by your abuse of the Administration and its friends. According to your expressed views, nothing was right. In civil and in military life everything was wrong. The policy of the Government was condemned by you in unmeasured terms. The principles of liberty were sneeringly alluded to by you as weak devices of fanatics and abolitionists. The appointments to office were "not fit to be made." Wisdom had fled from the rest of mankind, and taken up her solitary abode with you!

A Governor for New York in the place of the Hon. E. D. Morgan, who had served two terms with great usefulness to the State, and equal credit to himself, had to be elected. The State Convention that assembled in that year, following the popular heart, nominated for the Executive office that pure man and true patriot, the estimable and

deeply lamented Brigadier General James S. Wadsworth. You, following your own grovelling instincts, fell out with the representatives of the Union party. Finding you could not rule you determined to ruin, and joined your exertions to those opposed to the Union candidate. Your share in procuring the defeat of a man the latchet of whose shoes you were not worthy to unloose, is thoroughly understood. The wages of your treachery have been paid you. Why don't you emulate the last virtue of Judas Iscariot, and hang yourself?

In January, 1863, you dissolved your proprietary connection with the Albany Evening Journal, and proclaimed divorce between yourself and the Union Republican party. In your own language, you were "of no account with the President," and your haughty spirit could not brook further disparagement.

"Ah me! full sorely is my heart forlorn,
To think how modest worth neglected lies."

The world however went on as usual. No convulsion of nature countersigned the political phenomenon. Without a sigh or groan of anguish, or funeral cortege, you were allowed to go down among the dead men. Appropriate inscriptions were prepared for your tomb-stone. "Felo-de-se," was provided by yourself; "He feathered his nest," was suggested by a newspaper contemporary, and a London Journal furnished this: "A mortified caucous politician, prevented by the greatness of the crisis from wielding his power as a wire-puller." Why did you not remain in your grave? Why spite the race by exhuming your useless remains? You had ceased to be useful as an Editor and, owing to that "*sprained wrist*" of yours, could not be of service as a soldier.

To return to my cause of quarrel with you. In July of 1861, I was appointed Surveyor of the Port of New York. At that very time you were intriguing for the place upon behalf of Mr. Abram Wakeman, lately Postmaster of this city. You were foiled in your purpose, and gave vent to your ill-concealed vexation in splenetic remarks indicative of decaying mental powers. You found that the weapons you had so long wielded were too heavy for your years, and you adroitly resorted to the Borgia policy of secret craft. Open and honorable warfare had never been a means of success with you. You wanted the place for your favorite, so that you might be the power behind the throne; baffled in securing it, you resorted to your never-failing strategy of deceit. You called on me, and congratulated me. You called again and again. You fawned, and smiled, and wept, like the crocodile you are. You moved my sympathies. "The old man" who had so long swayed destiny and created dynasty was a suppliant to me. His petitions, too, were so unselfish; he wanted place only for "deserving persons," "good men," &c. I yielded to your entreaties, and gave to you for your friends a large proportion of the best places in my gift. You were "very grateful!"

Time rolled on. In the dark days of '63, when Treason was so defiant, you were enacting the roll of the melancholy Jacques, wringing your hands and uttering jeremiads of the dolefullest strain. You were especially severe in your denunciations of the President, whom you proclaimed an "old Imbecile," his conduct of the war a failure, and his advising ministers a corrupt and inefficient cabal. You should have stopped here. You said enough to

prove your contempt for the rulers of the Republic, and decency required that your attacks should be restricted to persons of your own sex. This did not sufficiently gratify your morbid appetite, and in the spring of 1863, in a public hotel of the city of New York, you announced to an indiscriminate audience that the wife of the President of the United States was guilty of treasonable conduct, and that by order of the Secretary of War that lady had been banished the Capital; an order which you declared was too long delayed! This occurred in my hearing, and I promptly denied the statement, and branded it as the invention of malicious mendacity. That same evening Mrs. Lincoln arrived in New York. I called to pay her my accustomed respects, and expressed to her my surprise at hearing she had been ordered to leave Washington, and asked her what the facts were. Her astonishment was only equalled by her proper indignation. She required me to give my authority for the statement of her alleged expulsion, and I related to her the occurrence as it transpired at the hotel. Subsequently you went to Washington, and sued for and received pardon for your gross offence; but you never forgave me for my interposition upon behalf of a slandered woman. In my zeal to save the first American lady from aspersion, I incurred the wrath of her defamer, and from that hour how to destroy me became his chief ambition. Thenceforward your hatred to me had no boundary but your capacity for harm.

Time still wore on. The presidential campaign of 1864 was at hand. The National Convention met at Baltimore. I was a delegate to it in spite of your efforts to the contrary. You were a dele-

gate to its lobby, that third house of whose committee of *Ways and Means* you have so long been chairman! To your chagrin, Mr. Lincoln was re-nominated. Your rage, like a secret fire in the bones, consumed you, and unless you had relief, there was danger you would become "Krook," the 2d, and furnish science with another illustration of spontaneous combustion. You rushed into print, and over the cabalistic "T. W." signature, launched forth several of those peculiar diatribes which have made your last decade so notorious. In the letter published in the Albany Evening Journal of June 11, 1864, you say, "Notwithstanding all "this, a formidable and organized body of ultra "abolitionists, 'loyal leaguers,' and radical demagogues appeared at Baltimore, for the purpose, as "they avowed, of procuring the nomination of Mr. "Dickinson for Vice-President, that Mr. Seward "might be excluded from the Cabinet. In this "miserable intrigue the ultraists of Massachusetts "cuddled with the slime of New York."

Now, Mr. Weed, *who* avowed the purpose of his appearance as a Delegate at Baltimore to be to procure the nomination of Mr. Dickinson for Vice-President that Mr. Seward might be excluded from the Cabinet? Cite me a single instance if you can in support of your slander. *Who* represented the ultraists of Massachusetts," and *who* "the slime of New York, in this miserable intrigue?" Give us their names, if they ever had existence, outside of your disordered and falsifying brain. Come, Sir, the game of the Artful Dodger will not serve the purpose. In this same letter you say that, "At "Baltimore, as at Syracuse, Mr. Lincoln's Surveyor "of the port of New York, was among the most

"unscrupulous traducers of Mr. Lincoln's Secretary "of State." *This* is sufficiently explicit for the purpose of allegation or proof or denial. *This* is a clear specification of a clear charge, and I meet it by pronouncing it a deliberately invented lie uttered by an unscrupulous old liar ! That at any time or place I ever spoke a disrespectful word of Mr. Seward, is a falsehood made out of whole cloth ; false alike in its warp and woof ; the coinage of a wretch who is by trade a liar, and whose practice has rendered him an expert in his calling. I mean *my* answer to be as explicit as *your* libel.

In this connection I gratify my sense of veneration for worth and ability, by adding that none of his countrymen admires the character and genius of this eminent American more than I. Mr. Seward is a statesman of whom the nation may be justly proud.

Not content with the foregoing libel upon me, you must again dip your quill in gall, and drag my name into your controversy with a gentleman upon whose "gaberdine you have spit." In your letter which appeared in the Albany Evening Journal, of June 25, 1864, you say, referring to the suit brought by the Hon. George Opdyke against you for a libel, "while appealing to the laws of his country, civil and criminal, Mr. Opdyke can, if he pleases, enlarge the field of inquiry, so as to embrace the alleged sale of the office of Surveyor of the port of New York for the moderate sum of \$10,000." This is not as well defined as the charge in your letter of June 11, 1864, but the fault of insufficiently stating what you mean, does not attach to me, and you must be presumed to lack confidence in an averment which is made by inuendo. Nevertheless, I will not evade

the inquiry. Tell me now, Sir, tell the public, *who* alleges that I paid to Mr. Opdyke or to any one, \$10,000 or any sum as purchase money for the office of Surveyor of the Port of New York. Give us the name of the alleged. What are his initial letters? Are they more than two? Are they not "T. W."? I have been subpoenaed as a witness in the case of Opdyke *vs.* Weed, and am happy in the belief that you are to be gratified on this point of the "alleged sale," whenever the trial of that cause shall take place. Now, Mr. Weed, are you not ashamed? No, I beg the pardon of shame; you are an utter stranger to its honorable blush!

To proceed: I had beaten you and your allies and myrmidons in the State Conventions of May and September, 1864. These defeats sat like a nightmare upon you. There was danger that the President might not suppose you as powerful as you had represented yourself, and that he would discover in what estimation the people West of Cayuga Bridge held you. This, you reasoned with yourself, must be prevented at all hazards, and as a means to prevent it, I must be further traduced by you. Mr. Lincoln's ear must be kept filled with complaints against "the Surveyor," and with recitals of "the disorganizing schemes of Andrews." I had been appointed to settle a difficulty, and I must be removed "to harmonize the party in New York." Besides, said one of your friends, "Mr. Weed will most certainly oppose the election of Mr. Lincoln, if Andrews is retained. This, I assure you, Mr. President, is the ultimatum of Weed." What a display of lofty patriotism! judge the world of its excellent quality! What would be said of the character for virtue of a woman who sacrificed her own chastity

because her husband smiled upon a mistress ? and what shall be said of the loyalty and love of country of a man who made it the condition of supporting the Union nominees that a blameless public servant should be ousted from office, his only offence being that he vindicated a woman from the slanders of a common scold !

Your conduct in this matter is not wholly without example. John the Baptist remonstrated with Herodias upon the enormity of her connection with the Tetrarch, and for his faithful reproof of her crime lost his head, upon the demand of Herodias' daughter whose dancing so pleased Herod that he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask ; " And she, *being before instructed* " *her mother*, said, Give me here John the Baptist's head in a charger. *And the King was sorry* ; nevertheless for the oath's sake, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John, And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel ; and she brought it to her mother." Is not the analogy complete ? Herodias and Weed ! John, the Baptist, and Andrews, the Surveyor ! The King, and —. But I forbear.

In September, 1864, I was dismissed from office upon your procurement, without any charge of disloyalty, incapacity or dishonesty marring the fair record of my official career. I had already contributed very largely to the expenses of the fall campaign in this and other states, and I affirm I spent more of my own money, honestly acquired, for party and political purposes during the three years I held a political office, than you, Thurlow Weed, have spent of *your own money, honestly acquired*, in your whole life, for like purposes.

I was dismissed, and you triumphed. In that

triumph you had your revenge. Relieved of office, and not imputing blame to the President, I devoted my time, money, and efforts to securing his re-election to the office which he adorns, and no man in all the land hails his triumph with more solid gratification than I. In the victory of the Union party over its avowed enemies and pretended friends I had a triumph the joy of which throws into the shade your satisfaction at my sacrifice. You are welcome to wear the laurels which have sprouted from the hot-bed of your craft and dishonor.

In parting with this subject let me recommend you to penitence for your past misdeeds. You are an old man, and should be in course of preparation for the change which in process of time will soon be upon you. Cease your stretching out after the things of earth. Be majestic in your decay. You need not wear sackcloth or sit in ashes, but you must curb the lawlessness of avarice, and abandon the impiety of rage. Try to become a Christian. Repent of your manifold sins while there is yet time, and take home to yourself the solemn warning of Junius to a moribund politician of his day: "You are now in the last act of life. Can gray hairs make folly venerable? and is there no period to be reserved for meditation and retirement? For shame, my Lord! Let it not be recorded of you that the latest moments of your life were dedicated to the same unworthy pursuits, the same busy agitations in which your manhood was exhausted. Consider that although you cannot disgrace your former life, you are violating the character of age and exposing the impotent imbecility after you have lost the vigor of the passions."

RUFUS F. ANDREWS,
*Lately Surveyor of the Port of
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